

### *Believes Cuts Can Be Achieved Without Requiring Change*

**(LONE TREE, CO)** – On the heels of an announcement today by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta outlining a new strategic guidance for the Department of Defense, which will direct the \$450 billion in defense cuts required in the next ten years from the Pentagon's budget, U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman, R-CO, a Marine Corps combat veteran and member of the House Armed Services Committee, urged Panetta to consider military spending reductions that achieve major budget cuts without compromising national security.

"I believe that we can responsibly cut defense spending without compromising capability, but changing our strategy from an ability to simultaneously fight two conflicts to only one compromises our security as a nation." Coffman said.

Coffman supports streamlining of the military as the first place to cut. He has been a critic of the Department of Defense for being far too top-heavy. He supports the merging and consolidation of headquarters and believes that there are far too many generals and admirals in the military today.

"The Navy has more admirals than ships and the other services are just as top heavy. I'll be looking for specifics to see whether this effort to streamline the military to reduce cost goes far enough," said Coffman.

Coffman believes that it is right for the Obama Administration to want to pay more attention to Asia and the growing Chinese threat to the region, but he also believes that the United States should demand that the Asian nations that want a stronger U.S. military presence share in more of the cost.

"We have 28,000 U.S. military personnel in South Korea and we have budgeted for \$13 billion for new military construction, all paid for by U.S. taxpayers. Why is the U.S. paying for this when we already are spending almost 5% of GDP on defense while South Korea is spending less than 3 percent? We need to look at all of our forward bases in the region and ask our allies to share in more of the cost," said Coffman.

“There are plenty of cuts available to us without reducing our capability. For instance, the Cold War ended in 1989, yet we still have 79,000 troops stationed in Europe. The DoD proposes ‘evolving’ our presence, but I would like to see all combat forces redeployed out of Europe. Only 4 out of our 28 NATO allies are spending even 2% of their GDP on defense because they can rely on the United States to provide it for them,” said Coffman.

Coffman said that he would like Panetta to take a look at the total active duty force structure to examine what active duty units can be placed into the National Guard or Reserve. He argues that now that we are out of Iraq and soon will be phasing down in Afghanistan that there may be opportunities to shift more active duty units into the National Guard and Reserve where we can maintain the capability at a fraction of the cost.

“The average cost of an active duty U.S. Army soldier is about \$130,000 per year, not including retirement pay and retiree health benefits. That same soldier costs \$43,000 in the National Guard and \$37,000 in the Army Reserve. We can save a lot of money, without compromising our national security, by shifting more of our active duty units into the National Guard and Reserve,” said Coffman.

“I’m all for making cuts so long as they don’t compromise our national security. I’m afraid from what I’ve seen so far of the direction that the Obama administration wants to go, it does just that by signaling to our adversaries that we are incapable of simultaneously fighting two conflicts at the same time. I look forward to reviewing more specifics of where the administration wants to go and working with them to steer away from putting our national security at risk,” Coffman said.

*Published January 5, 2011*